

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 124

Expressing the support of Congress for the Jewish community in Venezuela.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 12, 2009

Mr. MACK (for himself, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mrs. BONO MACK, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. CAMPBELL, Mr. CANTOR, Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. KIRK, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. McCAUL, Mr. McCOTTER, Mr. ROHRABACHER, Mr. ROONEY, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. SHUSTER, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. ROYCE, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. SCHOCK, Mr. MANZULLO, Mr. BROUN of Georgia, Mr. POE of Texas, Mr. PENCE, and Mr. WOLF) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the support of Congress for the Jewish
community in Venezuela.

Whereas it is the policy of the United States to protect religious freedom and to oppose hatred based on religion, nationality, race, or ethnicity, including countering anti-Semitism, at home and abroad;

Whereas the Jewish community in Venezuela has been a thriving one and the Jewish population included families that have lived in the country for over two centuries and many survivors of World War II;

Whereas according to the Contemporary Global Anti-Semitism Report released by the Department of State's Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, "in Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez has publicly demonized Israel and utilized stereotypes about Jewish financial influence and control, while Venezuela's government-sponsored mass media have become vehicles for anti-Semitic discourse";

Whereas according to the 2008 State Department's Human Rights Report on Venezuela, there has been a rise in anti-Semitic vandalism, caricatures, intimidations, and physical attacks on Jewish institutions from March 2008 onward;

Whereas the 2008 International Religious Freedom Report released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "[g]overnment-sponsored media outlets [in Venezuela] utilized anti-Jewish caricatures and political cartoons on several occasions";

Whereas the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has placed Venezuela on its Watch List of religious freedom violators, finding that official state rhetoric against the Venezuelan Jewish community created an environment where Jewish religious leaders and institutions are at risk of attack;

Whereas in December 2007, Jewish leaders in Venezuela and across the world condemned an armed police raid, in search of weapons, on a Jewish center in Caracas where no weapons were found;

Whereas, on January of 2009, a Caracas synagogue was ransacked and vandalized and the assailants shattered religious objects, spray-painting "Jews, get out" on the tem-

ple's walls and stole a computer database containing names and addresses of Jews living in Venezuela;

Whereas the Anti-Defamation League issued a statement condemning the January 2009 attack on the synagogue stating that "it is directly related to the atmosphere of anti-Jewish intimidation promoted by President Chávez and his government apparatus";

Whereas in February 2009, assailants threw an explosive at a Jewish community center, spreading widespread fear in the Jewish community in Venezuela;

Whereas President Chávez stated that "Israel continues to behave like the assassin arm of the government of the United States . . . [and that] the government of Israel is a government of assassins, government engaged in genocide";

Whereas, on January 6, 2009, President Hugo Chávez expelled Israel's ambassador to Venezuela along with six other Israeli diplomats;

Whereas, on January 14, 2009, Venezuela officially severed relations with the State of Israel ending 60 years of diplomatic ties and deepening the vulnerability of Venezuelan Jews;

Whereas Navy Admiral James Stavridis, head of U.S. Southern Command, testified before the Armed Services Committee on March 18, 2009, and indicated that "[t]errorist networks are active throughout our hemisphere [and are] involved in . . . logistical support for parent organizations based in the Middle East, such as Hizballah and Hamas." Admiral Stavridis further indicated that "our intelligence has demonstrated that pre-operational and

operational activities have indeed occurred [in the region]”;

Whereas according to the 2007 Country Report on Terrorism, released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, “two self-proclaimed Islamic extremists were arrested in October 2006 for placing a pair of pipe bombs outside the American Embassy in Caracas.”;

Whereas, on June 18, 2008, the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) announced that it was freezing the United States assets of two Venezuelans, Ghazi Nasr al Din (a Venezuelan diplomat serving in Lebanon) and Fawzi Kan’an, for providing financial and other support to Hezbollah;

Whereas the Department of State’s 2009 International Travel information on Venezuela specifies that since 2006, “statistics have shown an alarming 78 percent increase in the number of reported kidnappings in Venezuela” and that kidnappers deal “with victim’s families directly or [sell] the victim to terrorist groups”;

Whereas the 2008 Country Report on Terrorism states that “Iran and Venezuela continued weekly flights connecting Tehran and Damascus with Caracas. Passengers on these flights were reportedly subject to only cursory immigration and customs controls at Simon Bolivar International Airport in Caracas.”;

Whereas the 2008 Country Report continues that “Venezuelan citizenship, identity, and travel documents remained easy to obtain, making Venezuela a potentially attractive way station for terrorists. International authorities remained suspicious of the integrity of Venezuelan documents and their issuance process.”;

Whereas a pattern for terrorism against Jewish communities in Latin America already exists, exemplified by the fact that on July 18, 1994, 85 innocent people were killed and 300 were wounded when the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) was bombed in Buenos Aires, Argentina;

Whereas it was reported that contact was made by the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires to a mosque in Canuelas, Argentina, in the days before the AMIA bombing;

Whereas President Ahmadinejad and President Chávez have forged a close relationship;

Whereas according to the Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence, released on February 5, 2008, Venezuela has greatly increased its cooperation with Iran; and

Whereas according to United States intelligence officials, Iran possesses the potential to use its close relationship with Venezuela to facilitate the smuggling of people, drugs, and weapons into the Western Hemisphere through terrorist proxy groups: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That Congress—*

3 (1) condemns the anti-Semitic acts in Ven-
4 ezuela;

5 (2) expresses its support for all Venezuelan citi-
6 zens targeted by the Chávez government, including
7 those in the Jewish community, in their daily strug-
8 gle for freedom, civil liberties, and the protection of
9 the rule of law;

1 (3) express its grave concern regarding the in-
2 creased collaboration between the Iranian regime, its
3 proxy militia Hezbollah, and the Venezuela Govern-
4 ment, and the ramifications such collaboration will
5 have on the Jewish community in Venezuela;

6 (4) calls on the Government of Venezuela to
7 abide by its international obligations and to protect
8 the rights of the Jewish Venezuelan community, ir-
9 respective of their political views;

10 (5) urges that the Government of Venezuela
11 takes verifiable steps to ensure the safety of the
12 Jewish community in the country; and

13 (6) encourages the President and the Secretary
14 of State to reach out to democracy and human
15 rights activists in Venezuela, and to assist them in
16 their efforts in combating anti-Semitism in Ven-
17 ezuela.

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